

Dear Committee Members:

I am the mother of a 20-year-old nonverbal man with severe autism. He is physically aggressive and requires 1:1, and sometimes 1:2 staffing 24/7. He is currently in an MDSC group home in Missoula. We are inexpressibly grateful for his placement, his team, and the cost plan that makes it possible.

I write to say, first, that the impact of the cuts on my own son's services has primarily been the increase of his Medicaid case manager's caseload from 30 clients to over 60. This severely impacts her ability to look out for her clients, particularly those with no families who rely solely on her to ensure they are safe and cared for.

Second, it is heart-breaking that Helena Industries had to close due to the cuts. I assume that is not fixable with the influx of revenue, but I want to note it here. It's a sickening loss.

Third, the problem that plagues my son's services continues to be difficulty hiring/retaining staff. MDSC has had 40-52 unfilled openings for the 15 months my son has been in their care. They closed two homes last year, unable to staff them; this is a serious loss, since MDSC is the in-state agency that works with the more challenged, dually-diagnosed folks that AWARE, Opportunity, and other agencies won't take on (something I know too well from personal experience). Approving a raise for direct care staff, not funding that raise, then taking away hours and wages is making a bad situation worse.

Finally, Montana fails to provide a higher level of care for people dually diagnosed with developmental disabilities + behavioral/aggression issues. While the state currently will pay \$685/day for out-of-state behavioral treatment for 21 and under when the issue is forced (*achieved only through political and public pressure and inhumane treatment of families*), in the case of a behavioral crisis the only option for my adult son would be Warm Springs - an overcrowded, locked facility with untrained staff, plagued with staffing issues and allegations of neglect and abuse.

Whether the current influx of revenue can address any of these issues, I do not know. But I want you to know the problems stated above are real, and the people they affect are IMPORTANT and precious. They are Montanans, deserving of compassionate, trained caregivers, meaningful work, and safety.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely, Shawna Hanson  
Gus' Mama  
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